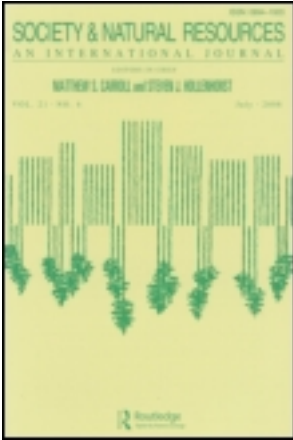


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### Tolerant Attitudes Reflect an Intent to Steward: A Reply to Bruskotter and Fulton

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## Tolerant Attitudes Reflect an Intent to Steward: A Reply to Bruskotter and Fulton

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*The terms tolerance and intolerance are widely used by scholars and managers alike because they are widely understood in contexts beyond attitudes or behavior toward wildlife. Tolerance is a frame of mind; thus, intolerance should also be considered one. Redefining intolerance as the opposite of stewardship would conflate intention and behavior; thus, I argue that tolerance–neutrality–intolerance should be a continuum of attitudes, whereas stewardship–inaction–opposition should be considered a continuum of behavior or action. In my framework, attitudes and willingness to steward wolves or retaliate against them represent intentions to support or oppose wolf conservation.*

**Keywords** behavior, intention, intolerance, wolves

I agree with Jeremy Bruskotter and David Fulton on several important points but disagree on their major claim that tolerance/intolerance implies action. Just as English speakers commonly hear the phrase “tolerant attitude” but not the phrase “tolerant action or behavior,” tolerance and intolerance are states of mind, in my view. Although tolerance increases the likelihood of positive behavior such as wildlife stewardship, it signals an intention, not the behavior itself (Ajzen 1991). Likewise, we would all recognize intolerant attitudes even if someone never acts one way or another toward wildlife. I am not splitting hairs semantically, because Bruskotter and Fulton argue, “intolerance, acceptability and stewardship can be arrayed along the same continuum,” which in my view will confuse managers, the public, and policymakers.

Instead, I see more than one continuum. The first is an action or behavior continuum: “stewardship–inaction–opposition” (or choose the words that you prefer to connote positive–neutral–negative behavior toward wild animals). In contrast, the second continuum is of attitudes: “tolerance–neutrality–intolerance.” Our article was not the place to test the correlations between these continua because we assumed tolerance (an attitude) would be consistent with stewardship (a behavior). We believe this is a simpler and clearer articulation than Bruskotter and Fulton’s, which conflates attitude and action. Hence we disagree with their unsubstantiated claim

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that “this conceptual model is intuitive and easily explained to managers and other interested stakeholders, and therefore has practical appeal.”

To their credit, Bruskotter and Fulton make several more important points. First they write, “The conservation of wolves may simply require hunters’ passive tolerance or acceptance of wolf populations.” I agree that stewardship may not be needed if inaction by hunters is common. Second, they write, “Given that hunters may be the only group that has adequate access, opportunity, and numbers to actually negatively impact wolf populations in these states, understanding whether they are likely to take such actions. . . is an important next step in this line of research.” Our article takes that step explicitly by asking about intentions and endorsement of specific actions. Finally, I challenge the Bruskotter and Fulton claim that “the model of conserving and controlling large carnivore populations through regulated hunting has been largely successful with black bears (*Ursus americanus*) and mountain lions (*Puma concolor*).” This claim is unsubstantiated (Treves 2009) and seems to assume that observing numerous black bears and cougars and observing them being hunted, implies the two observations are related. A skeptic would point out that conservation may have been successful despite regulated hunting simply because the harvest has not been unsustainable. The true test will be, if populations of cougar, black bear, or wolves decline drastically, will hunters voluntarily relinquish harvests to protect them? That would be stewardship.

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